

We claim:

1. An improved sponge applicator for coating a liquid onto the outside surface of containers comprising an open cell foam having a plurality of surface sections, at least one surface section designed to contact a portion of the container, at least one sealed surface for retarding flow of liquid from the sponge and wherein the sponge has an internal porosity allowing for flow of liquid through the open cell structure of the sponge.
2. The sponge of claim 1 having at least two unsealed surfaces for contacting the container with the sponge with one of the at least two unsealed surface sections designed to contact a different portion of the container than the other unsealed section and the at least one sealed surface retards flow of liquid from the sponge and wherein the sponge has an internal porosity allowing for flow of liquid through the open cell structure of the sponge
3. A method of sealing surfaces of a swellable open-cell foam comprising swelling the foam with liquid, expelling excess liquid and applying a sealant to the surface of the foam while the foam is still in its swelled shape.
4. An improved contact coating apparatus comprising a means for rotating a container to be coated, a sponge coating applicator having several sealed surfaces and at least one unsealed surface, means for contacting the container with an unsealed surface of the sponge coating applicator, and means for supplying coating liquid to the sponge coating applicator.
5. The improved apparatus of claim 4 having at least sponge coating applicators with one sponge coating applicators positioned to contact a bottle being coated by the apparatus at a different portion of the bottle than another sponge coating applicator.
6. The improved apparatus of claim 4 wherein said container is a glass or plastic bottle.
7. The improved apparatus of claim 4 wherein the sponge coating applicator comprises an open cell foam having a plurality of surface sections, at least one surface section designed to contact a portion of the container, at least one sealed surface for retarding flow of liquid from

the sponge and wherein the sponge has an internal porosity allowing for flow of liquid through the open cell structure of the sponge.